

Interview with Wayne Arnold

EC-A-L-2013-052

Interview: May 22, 2013

Interviewer: Philip Pogue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

Pogue: This is Philip Pogue. It's May 22, 2013. We're on the campus of Rend Lake Community College, outside of Ina, Illinois. We have with us Wayne Arnold, who will be talking about the community college, its history, and its connection with Mount Vernon Community College. So at this time Wayne, welcome to our project, and could you give us some background about yourself?

Arnold: Okay. Yes, I was born in Mount Vernon, January 22, 1932. When I was four, my parents moved to Bonnie. I went all through grade school at Bonnie Grade School, about eight miles south of Mount Vernon. My freshman year of high school there... At that time, several small high schools were three-year high schools, and my freshman year, '46, '47, was the last year for the three-year high school. Then I went to Sesser High School in Franklin County my sophomore, junior and senior year, having graduated in 1950.

My college, I attended Centralia Junior College my first two years, received an associate of arts degree in general education. Centralia Junior



Wayne Arnold

College [is] now known as Kaskaskia. I got my bachelors in education, with a major in physical education, from SIU-Carbondale [Southern Illinois University] in 1959, a master's in physical education from SIU-Carbondale in 1963, and a master's in recreation-outdoor education from SIU-Carbondale in 1974.

I taught Dahlgren High School three years, over in Hamilton County. They no longer exist now. They consolidated in with McLeansboro High School, which is now known as Hamilton County. I taught there three years. Came to Mount Vernon High School for one year and had the opportunity to come into Mount Vernon Community College. I jumped at the chance. That was the fall of 1963. We became Rend Lake College in 1967 and moved to the present campus in 1970. I retired from Rend Lake July 31, 1989. I was gone three months, and I've been back ever since. I was department chair in the Health-P.E. Department for twelve years.

The reason for being hired at Mount Vernon Community College was to develop their physical education program, which I did and taught what I called physical education activity classes, tennis, golf, bowling and so forth. I had a couple of professional physical education classes and recreation courses. I was asked to teach marriage and family, which I did, suffering death and dying, as well as human relations and health education, and I was head basketball coach here at the college for two years and baseball coach for two years.

Pogue: Why does Rend Lake use "The Place Where Learning Never Ends" in some of its materials?

Arnold: In talking to a colleague of mine who's doing this history, I don't think that was original to Rend Lake. I'm not sure if it was a national or state theme, but in a 1992 news release by the Illinois Community College Trustees Association Public Relations Committee that phrase is more than just a theme for two-year institutions as they celebrated the Community College Month during April.

Pogue: You talked about Mount Vernon Community College and your assignments there. Where was that located, and what relationship did it have with the high school?

Arnold: It was located in the high school. At that time, all community colleges were affiliated with the local high school. I know we were. Mount Vernon Community College, Southeastern Illinois College—which was Harrisburg Community College—being housed in their respective high schools. They chose to do that.

Well, going back to the beginning, the principal at Mount Vernon High School, named Silas Echols, was the principal at Mount Vernon High

School for about fifty years. He had stated the dream of having a community college in Mount Vernon. Then as time went on, it actually happened. But the high school board was also the board of trustees for Mount Vernon Community College. The superintendent at that time, Eltis Henson for the high school, conducted the business for Mount Vernon Community College.

Pogue: You talked about your role at Mount Vernon. What was the relationship with the people who taught high school classes and those that taught community college classes and those that did both?

Arnold: Well, I was one of those who did both for a couple of years. We had a very good relationship with the high school faculty staff. It was really a disadvantage to them as well as us because we were using their facilities. We didn't have the facilities at that time. But I know, being involved in physical education and athletics, I was more in-tuned with the coaching staff at Mount Vernon High school than other staff. But the relationship was excellent. We helped each other, and I couldn't have asked for a better relationship with their faculty staff than what we had.

Pogue: Were there any issues with the students being merged with college and high school?

Arnold: In terms of the issues, the issues I saw in developing the college physical education program... I had some high school students come to me and wanted to know if they could participate in our physical education program. They couldn't. That goes back largely to the lack of quality of their own high school physical education program.

As true of any area high school-community college, a lot of students who lived in Mount Vernon did not want to go to Mount Vernon Community College, not because it was Mount Vernon Community College, because they perceived the idea of going to college [as] going away to college, not staying at home. But as time went on, it got better and better.

I did notice in the wintertime, particularly when the weather got bad, the students who were absent or late for class were the students who lived right in Mount Vernon. The students who lived in West Frankfort, Benton, Sesser, the surrounding areas, they were the ones who were always in class.

It was a good ride, really. We were thrilled to death when we got this campus, where we could call it our own and use it whenever we wanted to.

Pogue: Could you give some background about how the college reorganized into Rend Lake. Were there any differences in programming and curriculum from the days in Mount Vernon?

Arnold: Oh gee, yes. Well, going back. As I mentioned, Silas Echols, the principal at the high school... But nothing was done for years. In the early '50s then the

General Assembly, recognizing the potential for a community college, passed an appropriation bill, allocating \$100 per full-time junior college student.

Shortly after the passage of this bill, Arthur Milward, who was then the principal of the high school—had been the assistant principal—came back to Mount Vernon as superintendent. He took the idea of forming a junior college to the board of education, receiving their approval. It carried into the community. In October 29, 1955, the citizens of the district voted a seventeen and a half cent tax rate to support the establishment and operation of a community college.

It was amazing. There were 2,288 acceptable ballots, and only eighty-eight were against the proposition. A year later, a gentleman by the name of Jesse Bogue—I think that's how to pronounce it—executive secretary for the American Association of Junior Colleges, said he'd never heard of such a great majority as there was in Mount Vernon, voting for the community college.

Yeah, there was a difference in curriculum. Of course, at that time I remember being part of the [curriculum] committee group for the college. It was relatively simple to get a course approved for the college. We met. We saw a need for a particular course. I recall at the Illinois Community College Board in Springfield there was one gentleman—I remember his name, Bob Darns—who was the person who had the say as to whether that course went or didn't go. We just kept growing. The purpose of the new college was to provide university parallel, occupational in general, and adult ed [education] classes to the citizens of the district.

At that time, there was included thirteen high school districts, Benton; Christopher; Hamilton County; Mount Vernon; Norris City; Omaha; Enfield, which is a consolidation of Norris City High School and Enfield; Pinckneyville; Sesser-Valier; Thompsonville; Waltonville; Wayne City; Webber, which is at Bluford; Woodlawn, and Zeigler-Royalton, which was a consolidation of Zeigler High School and Royalton High School.

Pogue: Have there been any geographic additions to the new college, once it was formed?

Arnold: Oh, yes. Again, referring to Dr. Rawlinson... Howard Rawlinson was our first Dean of Instruction, and he authored a history titled *The First Fifteen Years*. At the time, the inception of Mount Vernon Community College in '55, two philosophies were vying for supremacy. The concept of the community college as an extension of the high school and the concept of the community college, autonomous institution with its own faculty, equipment, building and purposes.

In the early stages it pretty well followed the philosophy of the high school. In '67 we became Rend Lake College. Not getting into the specifics about what happened, but with the state universities and the request by the superintendent of public instruction office, resulting in a certificate of recognition from the State of Illinois, the state universities stated that they would accept credits from the new institution, on a provisional basis. That has changed drastically.

Back at that time, four-year schools, they frowned down on the community college, saw it as a prep school for students to go to, then start four years at a major university. But as time went on, I think we proved to them that this was more than a prep school.

As time went on then, the four-year schools, they came up with the idea of what we call an articulation agreement. Locally on campus, a need, it was brought to the curriculum committee from a specific department. [They] brought it to and tried to explain to us the importance and reason for a new course to be added. It was our job to pretty well see that all the i's were dotted and the t's were crossed and that sort of thing. Then it was sent on.

The consultant that came to the college recommended readiness for visitation, and an examining team arrived on the campus in 1964, December of '64.

Pogue: As far as moving from Mount Vernon to the new site, how did all that take place?

Arnold: Well, of course, it had to come to a vote. They talked about this at great length. They had a steering committee that got together with the members of the legislature from the Mount Vernon area to discuss the suggestions of the dean's memorandum. The Board of Higher Education did approve this, and on September 5, 1956, the college opened its doors to a 199 students. Ninety-six full-time and 103 part-time students. Of the ninety-six full-time students, eighty-two were from the '56 graduating class of Mount Vernon High School, with a couple of exceptions.

Soon after that, the number of out-of-district students began to increase. Although no one knew it at the time, the future was outlining...Rend Lake College District was being shaped. The students came in increasing numbers from Dahlgren, Benton, McLeansboro, Waltonville, Wayne City, Webber, West Frankfort. And a few began to enroll from Christopher, Enfield, Pinckneyville, Tamaroa, Thompsonville and Zeigler. All of those schools are still in the Rend Lake College district, except West Frankfort. They were in the initial program, but for whatever reason, they voted to go to the John A. Logan district.

The new steering committee was formed, and Curt Parker and Lee Browning was named co-chair. Each county involved was asked to name two members to serve on a steering committee and to furnish educators to serve on a professional advisory committee. Then in September of '65, there was a meeting at Sesser, and nine high school districts indicated a desire to join in the effort. Then Christopher, Enfield, Pinckneyville, Tamaroa, Zeigler-Royalton agreed to be part of the district.

The college district, called 521, officially, always has reached into parts of eight counties, parts of counties, not entirely. No votes have ever been cast in trustees' election from the incorporated parts of Washington and Williamson Counties, to be included in the eight-county makeup. So in reality, it includes six counties.

As time has gone on, different schools have come onboard. For example, Woodlawn High School was added, with one-third or more of the students in the Kaskaskia district. Dahlgren closed in 1972, so they went to McLeansboro. Tamaroa became part of Pinckneyville High School, and Sesser High School expanded into the Sesser-Valier High School. As I mentioned earlier, McLeansboro High School is now known as Hamilton County Senior High School.

Pogue: The campus here at Rend Lake, how did that all come about?

Arnold: There were two or three other sites looked at. There was a site up at what's commonly called the Centralia Y. It's where State Route 161 comes in at a right angle, running east and west into route 37, north and south. It's between Mount Vernon and Salem. They looked at that to incorporate Mount Vernon, Centralia and Salem, three fairly large communities in this area. Another area was looked at in Mount Vernon; it was seventy-five or eighty acres. At that time the enrollment was growing at a more rapid rate than they thought it would.

When we became Rend Lake College in '67, we became what was commonly called Class 1 Community College. The doors opened July 1, '67, and voters approved [a] building bond less than five months later, in '67. When Rend Lake College was approved by an eight to one margin by the voters in the eight counties, the intent was to create a college, which would serve a much broader population base and not be perceived as Mount Vernon-centered. That was important. However, it would have been easier to identify with a larger community, such as Mount Vernon. Most people know where Mount Vernon is located. Not very many people know where Ina is located.

But they zeroed in on this property, where we are, 300 acres, just south of Ina. This property was one of the best farms in the county. It was a shame to the owner, who later committed suicide. He just couldn't accept the fact

that [if] any government agency wants the property, they'll get it, one way or another.

We moved down here. The groundbreaking ceremonies for construction was held March 27 of '69. As a matter of fact, it was the same day the college received word of its first North Central accreditation, so that was good timing. Before we moved down here, the college was, of course, using high school campus buildings, as well as leasing buildings elsewhere. They built the campus here.

We were the first community college in the state to complete its entire facility's master plan. People say, "How'd that happen?" Well, the board of trustees hired a gentleman by the name of Dr. James Snyder. His experience and expertise was in developing community colleges. Dr. Snyder did just that. He is one of the persons that really exemplified where we are today.

Pogue: Now, during this transition from the high school to your campus here, where were you teaching at, until the buildings were established?

Arnold: Still at Mount Vernon High School.

Pogue: And then when you came to this campus, were you in modulars [self-contained buildings]?

Arnold: No, we never used modulars. Our automotive program was in Benton. Our ag [agriculture] program was at Bonnie. The high school had closed, and we had a huge gymnasium there that was no longer used. The board of trustees and the administration talked to the people at Bonnie, and we leased that property for our ag program. It was there until a tornado came through a few years after that and blew it away. There was two dwelling houses across the street from Mount Vernon High School, and we used those as classrooms, office space until we moved down here. It was difficult, as I said, because we didn't have our own facilities to use whenever we saw a need to it. But it was that way, and we had to accept the fact.

When we moved down here, the fall of 1970, we thought we were in heaven, had our own brand new facilities. Some of the facilities weren't completed upon moving here. Matter of fact, the gym wasn't completed. We had the gymnasium, south oasis, science building. That was it, I guess. Yeah, the first phase.

I was talking to the department chair a while ago about reorganizing facilities. Our bookstore was in this building for several years, and I asked my chair, I said, "Andrea, do you know where the bookstore was when we moved down here in 1970?" She said, "No." I said, "Right where it is today." So what goes around comes around.

The administration has been very good, and the Board of Trustees, in utilizing the property that we have. When we first came down here, our technology program was a coal mining building, mining technology. We trained, retrained coal miners. At that time, the coal mines were going like gangbusters in southern Illinois. That changed. So with the change of the need for a particular curriculum, you have to change with that need. If you don't, you're going to get left behind. You're going to close.

We accept the fact that, you know, we're here to serve the people and whatever is needed. When [a] General Tire plant moved into Mount Vernon, Rend Lake College and General Tire has a tremendous working agreement. Matter of fact, we have a full-time person hired up there, and we train a lot of their personnel. Walgreens built a warehouse in Mount Vernon, and we train their employees for that also.

Pogue: You have some buildings on campus that are named after individuals. How did that come about?

Arnold: Well, the first building that was named was the administration building. Dr. Allen Baker from Pinckneyville, he was an optometrist from Pinckneyville, was our charter board member. Dr. Baker was relentless. His time was spent either here on campus, board meetings, or in Springfield or Chicago with the Illinois Community College Board or the Board of Higher Education, working, striving for the increase in development of Rend Lake College specifically and the community college system in general.

I guess the next building would have been the gym, Jim Waugh; "Hummer" they called him. He and I worked together here for over thirty years, and his record was good. He was a great person, served as director of athletics, and they named the gymnasium the James "Hummer" Waugh Gym. Jim was a pretty good sized man, but as I said, he was just a big teddy bear. And if the National Junior College Athletic office, from Kansas then, called here, they didn't ask for Coach Waugh; they asked for the Hummer. I mean, he was known by that all over the country.

Then our pool came on, and the CEO [chief executive officer] of a Benton-based boat company, Mariah Boats, had made several donations to ensure the completion of our facility. But he moved out and closed the plant unexpectedly. After that happened, we didn't get all of our money, so they removed his name from the building. But that's the main reason it was named the Jimmy J. Fulks, because he had the money.

Mark Kern, the Mark Kern Applied Science Center, Mark was hired here as an ag teacher. When we were still in Mount Vernon, he and Carol Turner was hired to develop their ag program, even before we had an ag program. But Mark was our president for seventeen years, the longest serving full-time employee in the history of the Illinois Community College System,

with forty years. Mark was very instrumental in the development of curricula and buildings here, and they named the applied science building after Mark.

When I was helping Mark Kern, the president, get things squared away to name the gymnasium after Hummer, I went in and gave him some information. We talked, and he said, "We're going to make a double ceremony out of this." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, while we're naming the gym after the Hummer, we're going to name the fitness center after you." I said, "You've got to be kidding." I said, "Mark, I was just doing my job." And he said, "Yeah, right." That was very humbling for that to happen, but very gratifying.

They did both of us at the same time, between ballgames one Saturday afternoon. They had invited several former athletes here. There was about eighty in the stands, and they had them all come down. I tell you what, I almost lost it when that happened. But it's gratifying.

And then Dr. Curtis Parker, an optometrist in Mount Vernon, we have an executive board room named after him. And then Marvin Scott, a guy from Belle Rive, a small community over here in Jefferson County, Marvin just retired from our Board of Trustees this spring, after thirty-five years serving on the board, a tremendous gentlemen and very honest. Marvin attended about every event the college had, and not every board member can say that. And Pat Kern, which is now Mark's wife. She was the CEO of our foundation for several years. They [school leadership] named the private dining room in her honor.

More recently, they have been upgrading some facilities. Hunt Bonan is a classroom, Mary Ellen and John Aiken Hunt. Bonan owns Peoples National Bank, banks, I should say. Henry and Cindy Leek, her husband Doug taught ag here for several years, and Mary—I can't pronounce her name—Periwlosi, very actively involved. And the Rubenacker Practice Room, Randy Rubenacker's on our board now. He and his father and brother were very actively involved with our foundation over the years.

Pogue: What is the role of that foundation?

Arnold: It exists for the purpose of trying to stimulate major voluntary, private support from alumni, retirees, friends, corporations, foundations, and others to benefit the college. It tries to use the current assets to acquire additional assets for identified areas of need, as outlined by the college. The foundation will raise funds in order to undertake, house, and administer the college scholar program, endowments. As a matter of fact, scholarships totaling more than \$450,000 annually are awarded to Rend Lake College students. That could be possible only through our foundation.

Pogue: Does Rend Lake have extension buildings and sites?

Arnold: Yes. Back at least ten or twelve years ago, there was what I call a strip mall in Mount Vernon, out near the interstate. Jent, J-e-n-t, Mall. They were going bankrupt. Mark Kern, the president, and Bob Carlock, our vice president of finance, saw a good opportunity here. We were leasing three other facilities in Mount Vernon, and they could consolidate that. Plus the fact that, at that time the state was mandating...that would require state agencies to be housed under one roof. So, that was a big factor involved in us purchasing that.

Some people didn't like the idea, because they said, "You're getting involved in retail." Well yes, but we pay sales tax and taxes, just like anybody else. We've got classrooms up there. Some of the other locations that we have... A number of years ago... Well, the community of Pinckneyville—thirty-five, forty miles from here, southwest—they always put it, they felt more like a step-child, because they were so far away that they didn't get involved. As a matter of fact, we were losing some of our students to John A. Logan and SIU-Carbondale.

So, with the cooperation of the business people in Pinckneyville, some state reps and the college, the extension campus became a reality. It's known as the Murphy Wall, W-a-l-l, Pinckneyville Campus. This is a State Bank and Trust in Pinckneyville and with the help of them and tremendous assistance from state Senators Bill O'Daniel and David Luechtefeld, we were able to get the job done. It's a nice little campus down there. A lot of students in Pinckneyville, they can get a degree down there.

Pogue: Are there any unusual programs offered at Rend Lake?

Arnold: Yes. When I first read that, I thought, Well, there's nothing unusual. If the people and business and industry in the community wants a program, why is that unusual? But a colleague who helped me compile this information mentioned our wireless communication technology and the coalmining technology, certificates in mine electricity, mine mechanics, mine operation, advanced mining and mine supervision.

And there's the enology/viticulture, which is comprised courses covering the requisites of agriculture, science, math and practical skills necessary to enter the winemaking, grape growing industry, which has become quite large in this area. So this is another opportunity for us to serve the need of the people.

We have a truck driver training program. After four weeks in the classroom and behind-the-wheel training, nearly 100 percent employment opportunities for those who want to work the field. It's very successful, and it's on campus here.

Pogue: What are some of the memorable events for both Mount Vernon Community College and Rend Lake?

Arnold: I think, to start it off with, the American Association of Community Junior Colleges decided for the first time to recognize the member institutions, and Rend Lake was that college. The coalmining industry in Rend Lake is a cooperative effort, in the spring of '75, with training provided primarily for maintenance personnel in electricity, welding, mechanics and hydraulics. I know I was teaching health and first-aid at the time, and they brought the miners here, depending upon what shift they worked. If the coalminer was working from 11:30 to 7:30, midnight to 7:30 in the morning, that's when they came here for their training. I know, a couple of times I was teaching first-aid at 3:00 in the morning out there. But that was the need, so we did it and made it work.

One of our alumni, class of '78, a young man from West Frankfort named Mark Michail, was recognized as our alumni of the year in '98. The Illinois Community College Trustees Association co-alumnus of the year, [was] actor/comedian John Belushi from College of DuPage. Mark was working for the ATF [Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms] organization, FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] division. He was most responsible for tracking down the Oklahoma City bombing suspect, Tim McVeigh. He had awards from the attorney general at that time, Janet Reno, of the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Distinguished Service Medal.

I hear people in our community still say they want their child to go to a college that a little more prestigious. I start telling them of some of our alumni and what they're doing. Well, one thing I mention to them, I said, "Do you have any idea where President Reagan went to college?" "No." "Well, Eureka College, a little liberal arts." You know where it is, I'm sure, Phil, up near Bloomington. I said, "A couple thousand students, maybe." And I said, "It didn't hurt his career." Another alumni, I had this lady as a student in 1992. She oversaw a \$2 billion project with 2,000 engineers and scientists for NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] in Houston. That's not too shabby.

Our college bowl team was very successful at that time. Our athletic program, about ten years ago, our cross country team won three Division II national champions—four; I'm sorry—and then another when they combined Division I and Division II. The difference in between Division I and Division II in athletics is Division I could give room and board; Division II can't. We were Division I, up until a number of years ago, and had some issues with our coach. We voluntarily went to Division II.

As a matter of fact, this year our men's basketball team, we were a Division II team, participating in a Division I regional. We won the regional and earned the right to go to the national basketball tournament for Division II teams at Danville Community College. We won it. That's quite an accomplishment for a Division II team.

The Illinois Community College Board award for excellence in a workforce presentation was presented to Rend Lake, Lakeland and Mattoon, Wilbur Wright College in Chicago for their efforts in preparing a qualified workforce in their communities. I was part of that program, here, in training correctional officers. At that time, Big Muddy prison hadn't opened, the prison at Pinckneyville. We had a group of faculty to work with the potential correctional officers, who were going to apply for that, to help train them on how to take the test, not giving them the answer, but just how to go about the proper method to take it.

The Department of Corrections has a physical fitness test that they run their potential candidates through. I was the one to do that. It was interesting. It was primarily to show them the process, to learn the process before they took the test. It was very helpful on some of the things that they had them to do. As I say, it raised the percentage of those passing from 40 percent to 72 percent, so it was very beneficial. As a matter of fact, we went to Springfield and got our award. I could go on and on with things that makes us proud here.

Pogue: How did your teaching assignment change over the years?

Arnold: My particular teaching assignment? Well, when I was first hired to develop the physical education program and teach health, the gentleman, Dr. Gene Estes, who was teaching health education, which at that time they called hygiene... Our science program was growing, and his background was botany and biology. They were needing him in that program. Dr. Rawlinson called me and wanted to know if I'd be interested in coming to teach in the college.

I knew I was going to be coaching, but I didn't realize I was going to be teaching. They wanted me to teach health and to develop their physical education program, which I worked at it. But I no longer teach those activities.

Back a number of years ago, well, early '80s, I went to Joliet Community College, to a fitness workshop. They had just opened what they called a universal aerobics super circuit fitness center. On the way home—this was in '81 I believe—I was thinking to myself, You know, if those people can make it work, we can make it work. I started writing it up. To make a long story short, the president and Board of Trustees approved it, the purchase of equipment—about \$60,000 worth—and opened up the summer of '85 as a pilot project and opened up full-fledged that fall. It's been very successful.

Later on, one of our Board of Trustees members was the administrator for St. Mary's Good Samaritan Hospital. We talked with him. We were trying to find a location in Mount Vernon and looked at a number of them for a fitness center. It didn't work. Well, we worked out a program with St. Mary's Good Sam Hospital, and we moved there eighteen years ago. It was very successful; however, St. Mary's Good Sam built a new hospital. Early on they wanted us to move with them, and we said, "Yes." But as time went on,

administrators changed, philosophies changed, so we now have our fitness center at the MarketPlace, which is where it should be anyway.

Then about eight years ago, there was a student at Mount Vernon High School, during the summer [he] was enrolled in our fitness center at Mount Vernon. He asked his principal at Mount Vernon High School if he could apply his physical education class, the fitness center, to his high school curriculum, toward graduation. They told him, “No,” I think primarily for two reasons. It wasn’t being taught by their teacher, and they were in faculty negotiations.

So, with those two things... Again, I thought, You know, why don’t we go to them? So I wrote up a program and presented it to Mark, our president. I told him what I had in mind, and he said, “What will it cost?” I said, “We can do it for \$80,000.” He said, “Do it.” We opened up there for the juniors and seniors, dual credit. They got credit. We supervised the facilities. They had the teachers there, supervising the students in the class. The students who participated in that, each class got their high school credit, plus we signed all those students up for dual credit. We still have it, still going eight years later. It’s been a great help to local students, relative to the dual credit.

An example—talking about Pinckneyville a minute ago—about four years ago, there was twin girls at Pinckneyville High School. They were taking classes at our Pinckneyville campus, dual credit and some not dual credit. When they finished their four-year high school, they graduated from Pinckneyville High School, say tonight, with their high school diploma, tomorrow night, from Rend Lake College, with an Associates of Arts Degree. They go to SIU-Edwardsville, right out of high school, as a junior. Now some people don’t like that. I know it’s... There’s social, but that’s not designed for everybody.

One other point that I mentioned about things that makes us proud, we had a Kenyan on our cross country team, track team, Boaz Lahan. He qualified for and went to the Olympics in Beijing. He qualified for the finals and didn’t make it. But, in 2012, at the London Olympics, we had a student, Ryan Bailey, representing his country. He ran against the world record holder, a gentleman from Jamaica named Bolt. He just got beat by just a step. So yeah, things like that.

Getting back to my change in assignments... You just change as needed. I mentioned a while ago about some of the things I taught, outside of my physical education background. Suffering death and dying, when they first asked me to do that, I thought, Oh gee, no way. But I got to thinking about it, and I’m glad I did. I think I learned as much or more as the students. It was very enlightening. Marriage and family class was exciting, interesting. Students asked me, said, “You run your family as a democracy?” I said, “No,

it's a dictatorship, and I'm the dictator." But there's a lot of stories I could tell you about that, what my wife did. But that's neither here nor there.

Pogue: As far as the student body, how has that changed over your course at Rend Lake?

Arnold: Well, you know, the change that I've noticed is there are so many students who... Let me back up a little bit. A number of years ago, we had a faculty in-service program. There was a person presenting a program, whereby a student would make no less than a C. The way the curriculum was designed, if the student turned in a project—let's say a research paper—to me, and the grade was going to be failing or a D, that student had an opportunity to take that back and redo it to get a C. I was amazed at what some students didn't want. They didn't want to be told that you got to make a C. I didn't understand that.

But I see so many students who... I'm very critical of teenagers. I hadn't dealt with teenage high school students until we opened the fitness center. There are a large number of them [who] shows no respect, not even for themselves. Well, [here's] a good example. I was going from the fitness center to the high school a couple years ago, to the principal's office, and this young kid stopped me and said, "Hey, dude, what time is it?" He shouldn't have said that. I proceeded to, I guess, preach to him for a few minutes. But that's the type of disrespect a lot of our students today have. But in saying that, on the other side of the coin, there's some great kids out there. There's some brilliant students here. The good students don't have any trouble. I teach a health class online, and I tell my students, day one, I said, "This class is not designed for everybody. After I explain everything to you, all the requirements, if you can go home and do this on your own, you're not going to have any problem in any online class.

But some students need structure. They need to be in a classroom, where they can interact with a teacher and other students." I teach a course online. I'm not an advocate of them. I just don't think the student gets the quality of education on an online class as they do if we're in a classroom discussing things, eyeball to eyeball. To me, that's an education itself.

But the big change is electronics, with students today. If I went from the library to my office in the gym, and I met ten students, I'll bet at least eight of them, maybe nine, will be texting somebody or on their cellphone or have earplugs in their ears, listening to music. I'm afraid we're developing an anti-social generation. They're not going to have the communication skills that they are going to need, unless it's on an iPod or something of that nature, of course. By that time, it probably will be. But that's the big change that I've seen.

Pogue: What has been the relationship of District 521 and the community as a whole?

Arnold: Let me back up here a little bit. It's been very positive. Going back a number of years, the early '90s, we had what [was] called the Generations of Excellence Capital Campaign, conducted by our foundation. It was a major fundraising effort, which the foundation already had one-quarter of a million dollars, to its credit. They have an annual dinner in December, and by that time they had that annual dinner, it was up to \$2 million. In '87, it reached \$4 million, gold, a few months before the 2000 annual dinner.

We had what's called a two-for-one endowment challenge grant that was possible through the first federal Title III program. The foundation gives major gift awards to citizens, businesses that contribute considerable amounts. I'm not going to get into all of that, but to show you the cooperation of our citizens and our community businesses and our foundation at the college, the directors of 2012, Ed Cunningham, CEO of a local hospital, Crossroads Hospital; Hunt Bonan, Vice Chair of the Board, Peoples National Bank and President; Mark Street, Bancshares Incorporated; Benny Harmse, Vice President of Manufacturing of Continental Tire of Mount Vernon; Kevin Pyle, Vice President and General Manager of Hamilton County Telephone; Bill Bush, Distribution Center Manager, Walgreens; Greg Sims, Vice President, Medical Group and Occupational Therapy, St. Mary's Hospital; JoAnn Joy, Senior Vice President of First Community; Steven Beal, CEO of National Railroad Equipment—they redo railroad locomotives—Steve Rowland, General Manager and Operations of coal mining industry; Randy Rubenacker, co-owner, Rubenacker Farms, Partnerships and 4R Equipment; Brad Gesell, co-owner of Gesell's Pump and Sales Service; and just on and on and on. So we've got a wide range of backgrounds on our foundation, and they work hard.

There's a number of others that has been involved or are still involved. But it's been a very good relationship with our community. And we get the community people involved. All of our specialty vocational programs have advisory committees. Let's say, ag production. They'll have local citizens who are involved in that to meet with our ag teachers' chairman to say, "Okay, are we doing what we need to be doing? If not, what should we be doing?" So we try to provide what they see that's necessary.

Pogue: What would the greatest challenges for the community college be?

Arnold: Well, a lot of them. Of course, early on it was a challenge to just get the courses articulated with four-year schools. That was a bear. A lot of them want the students to come to their place all four years. But getting the top students in local high schools was a challenge. We're getting more and more of those. Developing and changing and adapting the curriculum to accommodate these needs, which I've gone through that several times, just our image, having to overcome a stereotype for many years of the typical student, who could not qualify to go to a four-year institution.

There's still people out there—and sometimes I think it's our fault—who thinks our courses won't transfer. Quite often they'll hear a student say... Let's say a student's going to major in whatever, and they transfer. They change their major. Well, it's in a major curriculum at the university, but a lot of the courses they took here won't count toward that major. That's what the people hear about all the time.

But, again, keeping up the quality of education, especially in technology. As you know, that's changing so rapidly. In my area, health education, I told students, I said, "You know, if I wrote a textbook today, and it was published a year from now, half the material in that book, relative to health education, is obsolete." Things are happening so fast. That's a challenge, to try to keep up with that.

Pogue: What are the current enrollment and square miles of the district now?

Arnold: This spring the total headcount was 7,555 students. Another way of determining enrollment is what's called full-time equivalent, the FTE, is 2,567, and the total credit hours generated by those students is 38,500.

The district covers 850 square miles, which is the eleventh largest district statewide, in terms of area covered. The population of this area, a little over 90,000 people. That's based on the 2007 figures. And the college is the sixth smallest district, statewide, in terms of population and has a tax base of equalized assessed valuation of \$773,164,000. The towns in the area includes one city with a population greater than 7,508, of more than 1,000. Example, some of the major towns—this is based on the 2010-11 population—in Jefferson County, Mount Vernon, a little over 15,000; Woodlawn, 695; Bluford, 685; Franklin County in Benton, 7,000 people; Christopher, a little over 2,300; Sesser, a little over 1,900; Zeigler, about 1,800; Royalton, 1,100+; Hamilton County, McLeansboro, 2,800+; Perry County, Pinckneyville 5,600; Wayne County, Wayne City, 1,000; and White County, Enfield, 595 people.

Pogue: What does the recreation program include?

Arnold: We do not have what I call an organized, intramural program. When we first moved down here, we thought, Well, we'll have one. We had scheduled twenty, twenty-five activities in an intramural program. For the most part, it just didn't work. We're a commuter school. Eighty percent of our students work. The curriculum's set up here, where you get your degree on Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesdays, Thursdays. I've found that the people who wanted to participate in an intramural program didn't have time to do so.

But the physical education activity classes... We've got the fitness center, the three locations, one on campus, here in the gym and the Marketplace and Mount Vernon, the high school, the aquatic center. We have

aquatic fitness classes. People can join that as a membership or take specific classes.

The golf classes, we've got a driving range here on campus and a chipping range, where the golfers could practice their chipping. There's many clubs, organizations to meet the needs. Our college bowl is in what we call the South Oasis. When they built this, part of the student activities... We have the South Oasis, North Oasis. It has pool tables, ping pong tables, big screen TV, and things such as that, that the students can go in and do their thing. But our performing arts department has musical programs, dramatic programs for students that enjoy doing that.

And, of course, in athletics—if we consider that part of the recreation program—we've got basketball for men, basketball for women, volleyball for women, softball for women, golf for men, golf for women, dancing, which is open to both men and women; cheerleading, open to both men and women; track and field for both men, indoor and outdoor, and for women, the same; baseball for men; tennis for women; cross country for men; cross country for women.

Our former president, Mark Kern, his philosophy was, if we give the student a scholarship, if you will, to come here to participate in their selected sport, we won't get the tuition, but we'll get the state aid. They have to take every sixty-four semester hours to graduate, we get state aid from them. So that was his philosophy in getting them. However, unfortunately, this financial thing hit all of us, and this last board meeting, the board voted to drop wrestling. And there may be another sport to go.

Pogue: You talked about the community college working with four-year colleges on making sure transfer courses are approved smoothly. What other kind of issues have you had with four-year schools?

Arnold: Rend Lake is a participant in what's called the Illinois Articulation Initiative, the IAI. This is a statewide agreement that allows transfer of the completed Illinois transferrable general education core curriculum between participating institutions. It's a big help; it's security.

Also, Rend Lake and SIU-Carbondale has what's called the 2 plus 2 program. At the end of the student's freshman year at Rend Lake, that student arranges, with SIU-Carbondale, their curriculum. Now, if you change your major, null and void. [Rend Lake] starts this and the transfer students, their junior and senior years, have out-performed...

Well, let me back up a little bit. Southern [Southern Illinois University] does this survey, every year and have done it for years. They have found that when a student graduates from Rend Lake College, comes to SIU-Carbondale, their GPA, their junior and senior years, is higher than SIU's own

freshmen and sophomores. I said, “You know, if I was the dean of that undergraduate school, I’d be asking some questions.”

But I think there’s an underlying factor there. We’re not a resident school; everybody commutes. I think that’s an advantage to that. Some of our students here, I know they’ll go here a couple years and transfer to Illinois State, Illinois [College], Murray [State University], SEMO [Southeast Missouri State University] or wherever. Some of them don’t want to go here to start with. Many, many times, they go to one of these four-year schools, and I see them the second semester here, no later than their freshman year, they’re here.

I’ve always said one of the biggest adjustments for students, from high school to college, is free time. In high school the student is assigned a place to be, from the time they get there at 8:30 until school’s out at 3:30. As you well know, at college it’s not that way. You may have a 9:00, class and you’re next class may not be until 2:00. What are you going to do with that time? Better study.

This Illinois Initiative is very important and this 2 plus 2 program with SIU-Carbondale. The student, once he gets set in that, he knows what he or she’s classes are going to be, their sophomore year here and when they transfer to Southern. It’s already set up. They don’t have to worry about going in and making sure their class is there. It’s full. It’s done. It’s set up, so it’s [to] the advantage to the student.

Pogue: Our final question, Wayne, what are the long-term plans for Rend Lake?

Arnold: Well, myself and the chair was just talking about that a minute ago—they’re having a master plan meeting today—setting up a master plan for the next ten years. It looks good on paper, theoretically, but do we know what the industrial environment’s going to be five years from now, ten years from now? I don’t think so. So I see it just committed to every degree completing student, demonstrating the fundamental skills and trying to give them the effective critical thinking, problem solving and oral communication and written skills that they need to succeed in business.

The one thing that I see, and I hear business people say... Well, in my health class, I take off points for every misspelled word, grammatical error and incomplete sentence. The students tell me, “Mr. Arnold, this isn’t an English class.” I said, “Every class should be an English class. If you put out a product, you’re working for a company, and your boss dictates a letter, and you put it out with misspelled words or grammatical errors, you’re not going to have a job long. So let’s get that taken care of here now. It’s words like, “It is their book,” and they’ll spell t-h-e-r-e. Where was their English teacher in high school? Pardon me, but that just bothers me. Our long-term plans is to try to provide our students the best skills possible to succeed in life.

Pogue: Wayne, I appreciate you giving us an overview of the role of Rend Lake College, its predecessor at Mount Vernon and how the campus has grown during that time period.

Arnold: One point to that, about how it's grown...I hear people in Mount Vernon say, "Boy, the campus looked good. It looks better than it did when you moved out here in '70." I said, "We didn't have any trees. It was out in the middle of a cornfield." But the maintenance people does a tremendous job, the groundskeepers, keeping everything neat and clean. Of course, they make a mad rush, a week or two before graduation, to make sure everything's painted and all that stuff. Graduation was this past Saturday.

Saying that, something that's changed, we've always had our graduation ceremonies in the gym, quite often on a Friday night. Well, year before last, we had so many people graduating and so many people attend, we had to have two overflow rooms with big screen TVs. Last year was our first time we had two different ceremonies. This past Saturday, one was at 10:00 and one was at 1:00. The gym was packed both times. So, that's a good problem.

Pogue: Again, thank you very much for informing us about Rend Lake College.

Arnold: It's been very nice visiting with you. Anytime I can talk about Rend Lake, I'm ready to do it.

(end of transcript)